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ABSTRACT

A brief history of modern Rumanian is chronicled, focusing on the influence of a variety of languages on Rumanian's development. Four regional variations are identified: Dacio-Rumanian, Macedo-Rumanian, Megleno-Rumanian, and Istro-Rumanian, all evolving from the Latin spoken in the corresponding areas beginning in imperial Roman times. The evolution and geographic distribution of each of these variations is outlined briefly, and the impact of Greek, a number of Slavic languages, Hungarian, German, Turkish, Neo-Greek, and later, terms and phrases from Russian, Italian, and French are described. The influence of the Slavic languages is seen as the strongest and most lasting, and is attributed to Slavic immigration to the area now known as Rumania. Some specific examples of this influence in phonology, syntax, etymology, and morphology are offered. The alphabet and some sociopolitical issues in language planning are also considered. (MSE)

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Highlights on the History and Evolution of the Rumanian Language

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Several languages were spoken on the territory of present-day Rumania before Rumanian became the established national language. The Thracian language spoken by the Dacians, the Iranian languages spoken by the Scythians and the Sarmatians, and the Illyrian language continued by the Albanians today were the main idioms. However, Rumanian represents a developed variant of Latin, transplanted into Dacia and its surroundings by colonists in the early centuries. During earlier periods a language identified under the name of Indo-European was spoken in the yet undefined Rumanian country. The many branches of dialects or idioms eventually divided from the main trunk. In time these idioms became languages proper, and established themselves on territories known to us.

Latin under the Romans underwent changes as the Empire grew and absorbed the language of the new territories' inhabitants. It became the vehicle of an advanced civilization, leaving behind its localized, rustic flavor. As the authority of the empire gradually weakened, Latin could no longer remain the unique language. Thus there came into being several Romance language divisions of what had formerly been Latin: Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Provençal, French, Sardinian, Rhaeto-Romanic, Italian, Dalmatian, and Rumanian.

Rumanian identifies 4 different areas and names: Daco-Rumanian in Dacia; Macedo-Rumanian in the Pindus; Megleno-Rumanian in Meglen; Istro-Rumanian in Istria. In the early centuries Latin or the Romance

language which it became occupied the area of the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula, Pannonia and Dacia. Dacia became a Roman province around 106 A.D., but Dacia was under Roman administration for only 165 years. Emperor Aurelian withdrew his administration and legions to the right side of the Danube. Since Dacia had been colonized by foreign peoples brought in from every area of the Roman Empire, the natives had nobody from whom to learn Latin. It is projected that it was brought in from another country where the Romans maintained their influence for a longer time. As the colonists were brought in, they spoke other languages. That is why the use of Latin made communication possible among themselves and with the natives. With an established bridgehead on the left side of the Danube the people on both sides of the river continued to hold communication. The populations of the Rumanian regions moved south of the Danube, and those of the Bulgarian settled north of the river. In this way the descendants of those who left Dacia at the time of Aurelian may have contributed to the organization of the Rumanian language.

The Latin introduced into Dacia was a rather simple language, as it was the means of communication among various peoples who had known and used it imperfectly before; moreover, the only check was that of the necessity to serve as the basic means of communication among all members of the community.

When Slav influence intervened, the structure coincided with that of Latin and prevented the Rumanian language from developing rapidly. Rumanian retained different traits which popular Latin seemed to eliminate. From the very beginning one can say that Rumanian has preserved nothing essential from the Dacians.

After the Roman authorities had departed from Dacia, various invading populations dominated the region north of the Danube for a long period. Before the Roman colonization the Dacians probably adopted some Greek words, accounted by the fact that the Greeks were influential in southeastern Europe. The Latin language in the east of Europe possessed many Greek borrowings which became integral elements of Rumanian. After the arrival of the Slavs many other Greek words crept in, mostly through the old church Slav and through Bulgarian.[1]

After the disintegration of the Roman Empire there appeared in the first centuries two morphological characteristics which distinguish Rumanian from the other Romance languages: the preservation of the neuter gender and the creation of the post-positive article.[2] Numerous masculine and some feminine nouns denoting inanimate objects became neuter in Rumanian, while most Romance languages fused the neuter into the masculine gender. The preservation of the neuter resulted from the strong Slav influence which had begun to assert itself during the same period. As in other Romance languages the article in Rumanian was derived from the demonstrative pronoun, ille. It placed after the

noun, fused, and engendered a complete declension unlike other Romance languages in which the definite article preceded the noun.

Masculine

	Singular	Plural
Nom. Acc.	lupul	lupii
Gen. Dat.	lupului	lupilor

Feminine

Nom. Acc.	capră	caprele
Gen. Dat.	caprei	caprelor

Neuter

Nom. Acc.	scaunul	scaunele
Gen. Dat.	scaunului	scaunelor

After fusing with the masculine in the singular, the neuter fused with the feminine in the plural, thus maintaining its opposition to the feminine in the singular and to the masculine in the plural. The masculine indefinite article un, and the feminine o remain pronounced and precede the noun; also, there is a definite article, masculine cel, feminine cea, plural cei, cele used prepositionally with adjectives. A rather similar situation is found in Albanian and Bulgarian; thus the explanation that the common substratum, Thracian, had a post positive article. Nevertheless, nobody knows for sure whether Thracian had a post-positive article. The place of the article in Rumanian and Albanian can be explained by the place of the adjective, nearly always placed after the noun. We find this true in many other languages of the world. Primitive Rumanian split up into several dialects with the oncoming of people speaking other languages, chiefly Slav, who settled in various parts of the eastern Roman lands.

Though not taught in schools, Macedo-Rumanian is still spoken by thousands of people. Megleno-Rumanian is no longer spoken in the Balkans to a great extent, resulting from an exchange of populations occurring after World War I. Most Megleno-Rumanians who were Moslems moved to Turkey or were linguistically lost in another Balkan dialect. Istro-Rumanian supposedly from the south of those who left western Dacia in the Middle Ages, are now too few or denationalized after past generations. Rumanian proper is presently the former Daco-Rumanian dialect.

The strongest foreign influence on Rumanian was probably that one exerted by Slav, as it lasted for more that a thousand years. Slav masses came from several directions and settled down in lands presently Rumanian. With them they brought elements from their own speech and integrated them into the Rumanian language. Bulgarians, Serbians,

Ukrainians and Slovaks settled or located in bigger or smaller masses on the Rumanian territory where their descendants still preserve at least partly, the Slav avenue of expression. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Russians of certain religious sects under czarist persecution settled particularly in Dobruja. Together with the dissemination of the Old Slav Christian texts the church service was performed only in Slavonic. Moreover, as a result of the period of Bulgarian domination over part of the Rumanian land and of Rumanian political contacts with other Slav people, and particularly of the fact that Rumanian had no writing yet of its own, Slavonic was the language of the courts and all official deeds. A Rumanian variant of Old Slav was the official language.

The earliest letters in Rumanian handed down t us belong to the beginning of the sixteenth century. The tradition continued until the seventeenth century, even though private people had begun to write in Rumanian. In addition to this administrative influence the practical relations of the Rumanians with Slav peoples--Bulgarians, Serbians, Ukrainians, Polish, and during recent centuries, Russian, allowed the oral penetration into Rumanian.

Although dropped in Latin the h sound reappeared in Rumanian by words borrowed from Slav (haină - coat); the appearance of palatalized consonants (lupi - wolves, pronounced lup); the iodization of e at the beginning of a syllable (el - he, eram - I was) are pronounced iel, ieram. This last point needs more study among linguists.

Numerous Slav influences exist in the syntax such as in the use of the reflexive verbal forms. The reflexive conjugation already existed in Latin and in other Romance languages in which the structure has added values. Rumanian has given it much added dimension and a more varied usage. The fact that Rumanian reflexives express precisely the same categories of relations as those in Slav convinces us of a Slav influence. Besides the common objective reflexive as (mă spăl - I wash myself) which also characterizes several languages, we find the reciprocal reflexive (mă bat - I fight or I am fighting), the eventive one, (se îngraşă - he becomes or is becoming fat), the impersonal (se zice că - it is said that), the passive (expozitie se deschide astăzi - the exhibition is opening up today), the dynamical reflexive, the subject performing the action with intensive participation, (ma joc - I play). Graur mentions that there are some verbs which have both the active and the reflexive; however, the latter will be more commonly used: (gîndesc and mă gîndesc - I think or I am thinking). The reflexive expressed the Rumanian passive far more frequently before the Roman influence than did the participle and the verb, to be - a fi. The passage from the reflexive to the active is easily performed, and is frequently done. Examples of a verb that acquires multiple uses is: (se bate) is objective in (se bate cu palmă peste gură - he slaps his mouth with his hand), reciprocal use in (se bate cu duşmanii - he fights with his enemies); impersonal use in (înainte de intra se bate

la usa - before entering knock at the door), etc. With this syntactical flexibility the Rumanian enhances the possibilities of expression. Briefly, the Rumanian vocative was consolidated by the Slav influence after having been eliminated by Latin. There is an articulated vocative in the singular masculine, (domnule - sir). There is also an articulated plural form, differing from the nominative, yet identical with the genitive-dative. In the expression (Vă spun vouă, fraţilor - I tell you, brethren), where the last word was in the dative, but was perceived as a vocative, used later by itself. The feminine vocative, (fetelor - girls), etc. was formed, too. After the sixteenth century the Rumanian nominal inflexion was enriched with vocative forms.

Concerning vocabulary the Slav influence has been remarkably strong. Such categories as: the organization of social life: (sluga - servant); military terms: (puşcă - rifle), (steag - flag); religious terms: (sfînt - saint), (slujbă - service); names of tools and objects of permanent use: (baie - bathtub), (blid - dish), (ciocan - hammer), (pod - loft), (topor - axe), are of Slav origin. We also find many technical terms: (coasă - scythe), (plug - plough), etc., and the names of plants: (morcov - carrots), (ovăz - oats), (praz - leek), (sfeclă - beets), etc., are also Slav. Abstract notions are frequently denoted by Slavic words: (boală - disease), (jale - sorrow), (nevoie - need), (drag - dear), (vesel - merry), etc. Sometimes the Latin and Slav words existed together and were used in the same general sphere: (vreme and timp - weather or time); (trai - living, life, and viaţă - life). There are various Bulgarian borrowings in the Wallachian Plain, Serbian borrowings in Banat; Russian and Ukranian borrowings in Moldova and Northern Transylvania. Many words spread to all parts of the country; others became specific within a particular region, or disappeared after awhile. The greater portion of Greek elements entered into Rumanian through the Slav until the early beginning of the eighteenth century when there was more direct intense contact with the Greeks. With the Russian administration of Moldova and Wallachia in the first half of the nineteenth century, Russian influence became more intense. After World War II Rumanian turned to Russian for language terms and phrases, but for very few words. Nevertheless, many international words were borrowed from the Russian expression such as: agrotecnica, combina, radiofica, etc.

Rumanian adopted many suffixes of Slav origin. Many of them linger on in some marginal area or were more often used in religious translations. The Slav suffix has sometimes been superposed on the Latin one. Slav suffixes that are still productive are eală: (albăstreală - blueing), (găteală - trimming up); că used to form feminines from masculines: (romîncă - Rumanian girl or woman); iţă: feminines and diminutive feminines: (doctoriţă - female doctor), (fetiţă - little girl), and others. As a whole productive Slav suffixes have diminished according to Graur.[4] Latin prefixes have been less productive, but Slav prefixes remain productive.

Another important influence on Rumanian is the Hungarian one. Both Rumanians and Hungarians have been neighbors for almost a thousand years. In some parts of Transylvania, the most northern province of present-day Rumania, Rumanian and Hungarian populations live and mix in the same villages and towns. Because of the long political administration in Transylvania, the Hungarians were able, also, to impose a socio-economic supremacy; consequently, many words from Magyar were borrowed by Rumanian. Lexical elements crept into the Rumanian of that region, particularly Transylvania, where the Hungarian population was strong. Some words spread throughout Rumania. Words such as: (cheltui - to spend), (marfă - wares), (oraş - town), represent the bourgeoisie. Abstract terms: (fel - kind), (gîndi - to think), (viclean - cunning).

Although there have been large numbers of Germans living on Rumanian territory for hundreds of years, there are no important elements of German in Rumanian. Neither through morphology nor affixation nor through vocabulary did German make a strong inroad. Where the German population was strong or joined through marriage to the Rumanians an occasional word became useful: (kartoffeln - potatoes), (spătzle - noodles). Interesting enough many words of German origin came into Rumanian through Slav or Hungarian: (şort - apron, Germ.-Schurz), (pircalab - head magistrate, (Hung.-porkolab). Technical terms of German origin have been borrowed through Slav, Hungarian, or Greek which language specialists are trying to replace by terms of western origin.

Turkish influence was stronger during a certain period. Turkish Tartars settled on Rumanian territory before the Balkan conquest of the Ottoman Turks. From this population Turkish words were introduced into Rumanian prior to the arrival of the Turks in Europe. Some of the pre-Ottoman words were: (cioban - shepherd), (odaie - room). Under the Turkish domination of Wallachia and Moldova, many Turkish elements entered into Rumanian. Words connected with the political, military organization have disappeared after the waning political, social influence of the Turks on Rumanian soil. Some names of Turkish dishes have been preserved: (ciulamă - chicken or mushrooms cooked in sauce), (sarmă stuffed meat roll), (baclavă - kind of Turkish cake). Most of the Turkish words that have survived were borrowed from Arabian or Persian: (cafeă - coffee), (chirie - rent), (duşman - enemy), (para - farthing).

Neo-Greek crept into Rumanian rapidly in Wallachia and Moldova under the Turkish domination. Greek officials accompanied the Turks who did not learn European languages and needed the Greeks in various positions, especially as interpreters. In the nineteenth century words of Greek origin underwent a certain degradation as did the Turkish ones.

Although Rumania is not geographically situated in the Balkans, it assumed much of the Balkan character through the many cultural, political, economic events, thus determining many linguistical situations both north and south of the Danube. Mutual influence is exercised on neighboring languages. This lent a kind of "family flavor" to Rumanian, Albanian, Greek, and partly Serbian.

Despite all the strong influences exerted on Rumanian, Rumanian retained its Romance character in its structure. Its main elements are those inherited from Latin.[5] Paradoxically Rumanian has preserved its Latin character better than the other Romance Languages although surrounded by non-Romance languages.

For a long time Rumanian was preserved only by word or mouth during the time that the written language was Church Slavonic.[6] The first letter handed down to us written entirely in Rumanian dates from 1521. Religious books were being translated into Rumanian. With the invasion of the Turks in the Balkans, many ecclesiastics, translators and/or printers of religious writings fled northward. The earliest printing is dated around 1508 of Macarie's Missal and that of Deacon Coresi in 1559 in Brasov in the south of Transylvania. Authorities approved that books be published in the Rumanian vernacular be it Protestant or be it Orthodox. These translations characterized by Coresi's Wallachian became popular with the cultural awakening of the populace. When the New Testament was published in Alba Iulia in 1648, the Metropolitan of Transylvania pointed out the language differences among the various Rumanian regions and the need for people to write in such a way as to be understood by all.

The introduction of Rumanian into the church service contributed to a great influence on the written language. Rumanian made rapid progress under the influence of printed texts that laid the foundation for its unification both in pronunciation and vocabulary.

Formations of new foreign expressions and the need of a more exact mode of expression determined the increase in the number of prepositions and conjunctions. When regional dialectical differentiation was at its height, the difference was never so great that one Rumanian from one region could not understand a Rumanian from another region.

Normally schools contribute to the unification and perfection of a language. In Rumania there was no organized teaching of the language, although it had been used in writing for three hundred years. Greek was the teaching language in the few schools that existed. Rumanian was not consistently taught. The first Rumanian school was opened in Bucharest around 1818. Although several grammar books were written in the eighteenth century, they were not printed. The first successful Rumanian text appeared in 1828. Shortly after there began the teaching of Rumanian in schools.

Around 1800 the bourgeois class was growing and trade was flourishing on a broader scale. Theatres opened, newspapers appeared, and schools increased. People in Wallachia and Moldova turned to France and its great revolution. Words crept into Rumanian in large numbers through Greek and Russian, direct from Italian and especially from French, even from Latin. International words, particularly technical, were borrowed: (tren - train), (presă - press), (medicină - medecine), (electricitate - electricity), etc., and cultural terms: (meditaţie - meditation), (attitudine - attitude), (generozitate - generosity), etc. International elements continued to increase in Rumanian even to the present time.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century the development of the Bourgeoisie in Transylvania inspired the idea that since Rumanian descended from Latin, it should not encourage borrowings from any language less noble. Some words of Slav origin were modified so as to appear Latin. Since Rumanians had used Slav in writing, it was convenient to use Slavonic characters when they started writing Rumanian. When the idea progressed that Rumanian was a continuation of Latin, a popular notion insisted on the introduction of the Latin alphabet, particularly in Transylvania. In Moldova and Wallachia a transitional alphabet was created with a mixture of Cyrillic and Latin letters.

"The enrichment of the Rumanian language with elements of international vocabulary facilitates the learning of foreign languages by Rumanians."[7] At the same time it enables the foreigner to use a Rumanian text with more ease. Another interesting observation is that during the Middle Ages most Rumanian verbs belonged to the fourth conjugation. From the nineteenth century on the number of verbs in the first conjugation increased. This happened partly by the borrowing of ready-made verbs from the West where first conjugations compose more of the verbs than the fourth. It is not possible in this paper and during this short period of presentation to elaborate on the various elements and forms of expression adapted, borrowed, or formed.

With the modifications introduced during the last four centuries the Rumanian language has become greatly enriched with scientific, technical and abstract terms, becoming clearer, more supple, and sometimes more simple. With a flourishing literature Rumanian is translated into other languages to contribute to the great treasures of letters. Rumanian can express any idea of the most advanced conceptions of our time. Given the liberty of facts and the free access to ideas there is no level of knowledge or scientific discipline presently where one should not find a written report in the Rumanian tongue.

End Notes

1. Alexandru Graur, A Bird's Eye View of the Evolution of the Rumanian Language. Trans. Leon Levitchi. Bucharest: Meridiane, 1963: 25; 2. Ibid., p. 25; 3. Ibid., p. 27; 4. Ibid., p. 27; 5. Ibid., p. 40; 6. Ibid., p. 50; 7. Ibid., p. 50.

Note: In this paper it was hard to acknowledge any certain author, as information seemed to be consistent. The above notes are included for more concrete identification of one of two reference books by the same author.

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